

Testimony of Donna Baker

H.B. No. 6685 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE PRESUMPTION OF SHARED CUSTODY IN DISPUTES INVOLVING THE CARE AND CUSTODY OF MINOR CHILDREN.

Before the Judiciary Committee

April 5, 2013

Dear Co-Chairmen, Ranking Members and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

We all realize that family dynamics are at best difficult. However, the family court system with the aid of the Guardian Ad Litem instigate most situations. I have sat in the court room and viewed cases unrelated to my family and am astounded at what transpired.

The Guardian Ad Litem system is out of control. The same attorneys are usually appointed at an hourly rate of \$200.00 to \$350.00 an hour and the same mental health professionals are appointed at an hourly rate of \$200.00 to \$300.00 an hour. Why are the usual players appointed by the same judge? Why are the fees unusually high and who is allowing the fees? Would parents retain legal and mental health professionals at this cost knowing they could not possibly afford it?

Specifically, a Guardian Ad Litem stood up in front of the judge and stated the balance for his fees for both parents. He then initiated a Motion to have the mother pay her balance, but did not do the same for the father who owed a higher balance. He then stated if the mother could not pay she should face jail time. This same attorney had a mother put in York Correctional Center in Niantic for 14 days over a Dispute over legal fees. I wasn't aware we still had a DEBTORS PRISON. This is an archived article by Thomas B. Scheffey in the Ct. Law Tribune on January 30, 2012. The title of the article is Dispute over Legal Fees Sends Client to Jail.

The above mentioned legal and mental health professional have exclusive access to minors. If a parent questions procedures the tide can easily turn against them. Minors told by professionals that it could be arranged that you will not have contact with a parent until they are 18 or I can get you parent in trouble. I have transcripts and text messages available that will site questionable meetings with minor children the incidents definitely cross acceptable codes of conduct. If these procedures are not investigated it would be criminal. The transcripts clearly state knowledge of child abuse acknowledged by guardians and improper conduct by court appointed professionals. This is indicated in transcripts and text messages clearly reported to guardians without a response or heard in a courtroom by a judge and just overlooked. Again, I cannot stress enough that this evidence is in black and white. Now that guardians and judges have been informed and have simply ignored what has been reported what will be their legacy?

The elephant in the room is why are the same players involved in the most controversial and long running cases? Why are they a constant

Figure in the hallway and courtrooms of the family court? Have these individuals mastered the art of racking up fees? It would seem after viewing specifically the two individuals involved in the most high profile case and other cases they should have at least been nominated for a Golden Globe for best performance in a drama. Again, the drama created by guardian's drives up the cost and stress level of the parents.

Please investigate the family court system; at the very least a yellow tape should be put up at the third floor. If all of the above sounds over the top, other parents are waiting to testify and expose this system.